AERONAUTICAL CHARTING FORUM
Charting Group
Meeting 13-01 – April 24-25, 2013

RECOMMENDATION DOCUMENT

FAA Control # ACF-CG RD 13-01-262

Subject: Airport Facility Directory (AFD) Depiction of Traffic Pattern Altitudes

Background/Discussion:
Many years ago, the standard traffic patterns at airports was 800' AGL. The FAA has published in the Aeronautical Information Manual a recommended traffic pattern of 1000' AGL This is only referenced in figure 4-3-2:

EXAMPLE-
Key to traffic pattern operations

1. Enter pattern in level flight, abeam the midpoint of the runway, at pattern altitude. (1,000' AGL is recommended pattern altitude unless established otherwise. . .)

Sometimes traffic pattern altitudes appear in the A/FD, sometimes they do not.

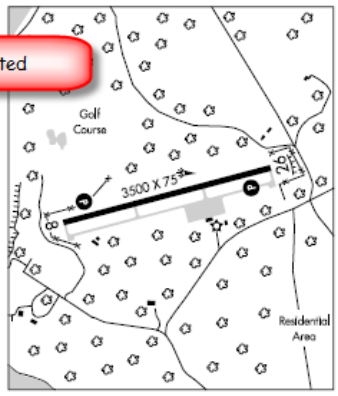
Recommendations:

1. Publish all traffic pattern altitudes or
2. Only publish those traffic pattern altitudes that are non-standard, i.e. different than 1000' AGL.

* See example on next page.

MACKINAC ISLAND (MCD) 1 NW UTC−5(−4DT) N45°51.90′ W84°38.24′ — LAKE HURON
739 B TPA—2639 (1900) NOTAM FILE MCD — L–31B
RWY 08–26: H3500X75 (ASPH–PFC) S-13 MIRL 0.4% up E — IAP
RWY 08: REIL. PAPI(P4L)—GA 3.5° TCH 20′. Trees.
RWY 26: REIL. PAPI(P4L)—GA 3.8° TCH 38′. Trees.
AIRPORT REMARKS: Attended 1300–2200Z‡. Noise a
procedures: Tfc pattern altitude 1900′ MSL; cli
before turning; avoid flight over shore and town; no touch and go
ldgs. Birds on and invof arpt. Flocks of seagulls invof landfill 0.3
miles NE. Rwy 08–26 slopes up from E to W. Rwy 08 and Rwy 26
PAPI unusable byd 5° left of centerline. ACTIVATE MIRL Rwy
08–26 and PAPI Rwys 08 and 26 and REIL Rwys 08 and
26—122.8. Ldg fee.
WEATHER DATA SOURCES: AWOS–3 118.275 (906) 847–3778.
COMMUNICATIONS: CTAF/UNICOM 122.7
Ⓡ MINNEAPOLIS CENTER APP/DEP CON 134.6
RADIO AIDS TO NAVIGATION: NOTAM FILE PLN.
PELLSTON (L) VORTACW 111.8 PLN Chan 55 N45°37.84′
W84°39.85′ 011° 14.1 NM to fld. 840/6W. HIWAS.
COMM/NAV/WEATHER REMARKS: AWOS–3 visibility unreliable.

TPA depicted



MACKINAC ISLAND N45°53.48′ W84°44.09′ — LAKE HURON
RCO 122.35 (GREEN BAY RADIO) at Mackinac Co. — L–31B

MADDS N42°29.69′ W83°05.60′ NOTAM FILE DET. — DETROIT
NDB (LOM) 338 DE 149° 6.3 NM to Coleman A. Young Muni. Unmonitored.

MAIDENS (See WILLIAMSTON)

MALLY N42°07.61′ W86°18.80′ NOTAM FILE BEH. — CHICAGO
NDB (LOM) 397 BE 274° 5.1 NM to Southwest Michigan Rgnl. Unmonitored.

MANCELONA MUNI (D9Ø) 2 N UTC−5(−4DT) N44°55.50′ W85°04.00′ — GREEN BAY
1133 NOTAM FILE LAN
RWY 18–36: 3400X140 (TURF)
RWY 18: Trees. RWY 36: Tree.
RWY 10–28: 2050X120 (TURF)
RWY 10: Thld dsplcd 830′. Trees. RWY 28: Thld dsplcd 200′. Tree.
AIRPORT REMARKS: Unattended. Arpt CLOSED when snow covered and Nov thru Apr 15 rwys not plowed. Rwy 18–36 and Rwy 10–28 marked with 3′ yellow cones.
COMMUNICATIONS: CTAF 122.9

No TPA depicted

MANCHESTER
ROSSETTIE (75G) 3 N UTC−5(−4DT) N42°11.70′ W84°01.85′ — DETROIT COPTER
1005 NOTAM FILE LAN
RWY 18–36: 2480X100 (TURF) LIRL (NSTD)
RWY 18: Trees. RWY 36: Thld dsplcd 665′. Road. Rgt tfc.
AIRPORT REMARKS: Attended irregularly. Field gets muddy in spring. Rwy on rolling terrain. Rwy 18–36 NSTD LIRL due to spacing. Rwy 18–36 marked with 2′ yellow cones and painted tires.
COMMUNICATIONS: CTAF 122.9

Comments:

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Date: March 4, 2013

MEETING 13-01: Valerie Watson, AJV-3B, briefed the topic on behalf of the submitter. Valerie stated that currently the FAA is not consistent in reporting traffic pattern altitudes (TPA) in the AFDs. In the past, the FAA only reported TPAs when they were other than 1000 feet above ground level (AGL). Now, there are a large number of 1000 ft AGL traffic pattern altitudes reported, especially in certain parts of the country. If even the standard is reported, what does this mean for airports without a published TPA? Valerie reported that the AFD data is pulled directly from NASR. If there is a value in the NASR TPA field, it will be published in the AFD. In her view, a decision needs to be made at the data level (NASR) whether ALL TPAs will be databased & published, or if they will only be published by exception to the 1000 ft AGL standard. She asked the group for input.

John Moore commented that the TPA altitude of 1000 ft AGL is only a recommendation, not a specified standard. Valerie restated her question – should the FAA publish all TPAs or only those in exception to the recommended 1000 ft AGL?

Lev Prichard, APA, suggested that only those airports that have TPAs other than that recommended in the AIM be published. Lev emphasized that the FAA AIM guidance on TPAs is what pilots have to refer to in knowing what is considered the standard TPA of 1000 AGL at an airport. There was general agreement to this position.

Curtis Davis, AJV-21, stated he was unaware of current NASR practice, but would research and report back.

It was the general recommendation of the group that NASR only database TPAs that differ from the recommended 1000 ft AGL. Pilots, when no TPA is published, will revert to that recommended.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Curtis Davis, AJV-21, will research to determine if NASR is putting in the recommend TPA of 1000 feet AGL for all airport entries and will report back on the findings at the next ACF.

MEETING ACF 13-02:

Valerie Watson, AJV-3, reviewed the topic. Chris Criswell, AJV-22, provided an update on actions taken since the last ACF. Chris stated that in discussions with the FAA Office of Airports, AAS-100, the FAA Form 5010 is the source for all traffic pattern altitudes. What appears on the 5010 is the responsibility of the Office of the Airports. Chris stated that NASR ingests the 5010 information, databases it and then disseminates the data as submitted. Chris emphasized that NASR will not edit or adjust data submitted and that to truly fix the issue, the 5010 will need to be altered/modified.

Brad Rush, AJV-3, stated that the last time the FAA Order 5010.4 Airport Safety Data Program, was revised was 1981. Brad added that the Order/Forms only require the airport to identify airports that have nonstandard traffic patterns. There is no requirement in the current order to provide 1000' pattern altitude information.

Valerie stated that apparently the Office of Airports is NOT reporting only nonstandard pattern altitudes, as there are numerous instances of the recommended 1000' traffic pattern altitudes in NASR and these values presumably came from the 5010 source.

A discussion followed, with one solution being, that since NASR databases some standard pattern altitudes, but not all, the Airport Facility Directory team could cull the 1000' traffic pattern altitudes out manually.

Bob Carlson, AJV-322, commented that such an approach would require the AFD team to vet all data published in the AFD, thereby losing the production efficiency gains made by the recent automation of the publication.

Rich Boll, NBAA, reminded the audience that while GA aircraft generally fly a standard pattern altitude of 1000' above ground level (AGL), that altitude is primarily for single engine, piston aircraft. Twin engine and turbine powered aircraft have a standard pattern altitude of 1500' AGL, as referenced in the AIM – Paragraph 4-3-3. Rich inquired as to how those other standard altitudes are handled in the 5010. Rich added that if the data is going to be captured that "we" (i.e. the General Aviation community) will want to see them as separate attributes in the AFD and to not have the information buried within the remarks section of an airport entry.

John Collins, GA Pilot, inquired as why the AFD team couldn't put something in the AFD that states that standard GA recommended altitude is 1000'.

Valerie responded by stating that this type of information is referenced in the AIM and that the AFD is not the place where pilots should be looking for such guidance material.

Chris reemphasized that the big issue is the data itself and the need to have the right data entered into the system.

The consensus of attendees was that ALL traffic pattern altitudes should be collected by the Office of Airports, databased in NASR and published in the AFD. Support for this decision was strengthened in light of the fact that the "recommended" or "nonstandard" altitude differs depending on aircraft type.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Chris Criswell, AJV-22, will work with Office of Airports to collect ALL traffic pattern altitudes. Chris will report at the next ACF.

MEETING 14-01:

Chris Criswell, AJV-22, reported that, per ACF recommendation, all traffic pattern altitudes, standard and non-standard, will be added into NASR for all airports. This will be a day forward implementation beginning in July 2014.

Valerie Watson, AJV-3, stated that this issue will remain open pending implementation.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Chris Criswell, AVJ-22, will report on the progress of populating all traffic pattern altitudes at the next ACF.